

Notice of Intention issued 2023

The Crabtree House; 559 Lang's Road

Description of Property

The Crabtree House, 559 Lang's Road is located in the Viscount-Alexander Park (Fairhaven) neighborhood on the east side of Lang's Road, south of the rock quarry, and across the street from the Hôpital Montfort.

Cultural Heritage Value

The Crabtree House has design value as an excellent example of modernist residential architecture within Ottawa. It demonstrates architectural features that are characteristic of this style, including overhanging eaves, a flat roof, cantilevered elements, simple front entrance, multiple cladding material, large floor-to-ceiling windows, limited ornamentation and an integrated carport.

It displays a high degree of craftsmanship and artistic merit through its unique architectural details such as its brise-soleil, geometric built forms, contrasting cladding material, and the careful integration of the property into its unaltered landscape. The architectural expression demonstrates common modernist themes including minimalism and harmony with nature.

The Crabtree House has historical value for its association with the Fairhaven Cooperative. Created in 1947 by a small group of employees at the National Research Council, the cooperative established a set of regulations to help shape the architecture of the neighbourhood to ensure it aligned with modernist ideals. The cooperative was the first of its kind in Canada.

The property is also directly associated with its first owners, Graham and Dorothy Crabtree. Graham Crabtree's work at Crawley Films and the National Film Board included working on pieces of Canadian media that helped develop Canada's identity as a nation in the mid 20th century. Dorothy Crabtree's work at the National Research Council contributed to the development of the Canadarm, which stands as one of Canada's most significant contributions in the field of robotics.

The Crabtrees commissioned local architect Matthew Stankiewicz to design the house and it stands as an excellent example of his work in Ottawa. Stankiewicz was a well-known Modern architect designing a range of buildings including other houses, the Unicentre and Carleton University and the Canadian Pavilion at Expo '67.

The Crabtree House has contextual value for its role in defining the character of the area due to its location within Fairhaven development and association with its cooperative. The property's connections to both helped to influence its architecture, setback, and surrounding landscaping, and its location within the neighborhood is a physical reminder of the community that Fairhaven once envisioned for themselves.

It is physically and visually linked to its surroundings through its intentional incorporation into the natural landscape, resulting in the house being partially below grade.

Heritage Attributes

The key exterior elements that contribute to the design or physical value of 559 Lang's Road as an excellent residential example of the modernist style include its:

- Overhanging eaves
- Cantilevered balconies and upper-level living spaces on the west and south facades
- Minimalist design of the entryways
- The two-storey brise-soleil in a geometric pattern on the west façade
- The use of multiple cladding materials including vertical wood panelling, white stucco, and concrete
- The functional design of the incorporated carport on the west façade that also accentuates the house's natural integration into the landscape of the property.
- The partial exposure of the first level that accentuate the home's integration into the landscape.
- The floor-to-ceiling windows that provide a near-panoramic view of the wooded landscape of the property.

The key interior elements that highlight the Crabtree House as an excellent example of a Modernist house include:

- Open space between the atrium and the lofted living space that emphasise the floor-to-ceiling windows and strengthens the link between the outdoor and indoor spaces.
- Floor-to-ceiling corkboard wall initially created as a place to display art pieces and reference materials for Graham Crabtree's artwork

The key contextual elements that highlight the Crabtree House as an excellent example of a mid-century Modernist structure and link it to its context include:

- Viewscape of the trees that add to the natural aesthetic of the property
- The landscaping where the house is situated partially below grade
- Tree cover obscuring the house from Lang's Road and surrounding the driveway to the house
- The rocky landscaping that abuts the driveway, adding to the natural appearance of the property

The interior of the house except for the attributes outlined above is excluded from the designation.